

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be on him)



Help People to Help Themselves

Charity

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah.



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaeihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Al-Baqarah 184-185

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ
فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ
أُخْرَىٰ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ
فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۖ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[2:184] O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.

[2:185] The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation — the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.

In the words of the Messiah...

The Holy Qur'an

Now under heaven there is only one prophet and only one book. The prophet is Muhammad, the chosen one, peace be upon him, who is higher and more exalted than all prophets and is the most perfect of messengers and is the *Khatam-ul-Anbiya* (Seal of the prophets), and the best of men by following whom we find God Almighty and all the veils of darkness are lifted and the signs of true salvation are witnessed in this very life.

The book is the Holy Qur'an, which comprises true and perfect guidance and effectiveness, through which knowledge and understanding of the Divine are obtained and the heart is purified of human weaknesses, and being delivered from ignorance, heedlessness and doubts, a person arrives at the stage of complete certainty. (*Braheen-e-Ahmadiyyah*, p. 467-468, sub-footnote 3)

There have been millions of pure-natured people in the world and there will be more in the future, but we have found the best of all of them and the highest man of God, whose name is Muhammad, peace be upon him. Allah and His angels call down blessings on the Prophet and you believers [also] call down blessings on him and greet him with the greet-



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

ing of peace. We shall leave aside any mention of the holy ones from among those people whose circumstances have not been described in detail in the Holy Qur'an. We shall express our view only with regard to the prophets who are mentioned in the Qur'an like Moses, David, Jesus and other prophets, peace be upon them. We affirm it on oath, calling God to witness, that if the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, had not come into the world, and the Holy Qur'an had not been revealed, and we had not seen with our own eyes the blessings that we have witnessed, the truth of all past prophets would have remained doubtful in our eyes. No reality can be gathered from mere stories, for it is quite possible that they may not be true and it is also possible that the miracles that are attributed to these prophets might be exaggerations, for no sign of them is visible today. We cannot even ascertain for certain from the books revealed in the past that God

truly exists, because we are not assured that God speaks to man. But through the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, all these stories became real. We now realize not merely as a statement, but as a matter of experience, what converse with the Divine means and how God's signs are manifested and how prayers are answered. All this we have discovered by following the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, and what other people relate as stories we have witnessed it all. We have attached ourselves to a prophet who manifests God to us.

How shall we express our gratitude to God who bestowed upon us the good fortune to follow the prophet who is a sun for the souls of the righteous as there is a sun for the bodies. He appeared in a time of darkness and illumined the world with his light. He was neither tired nor fatigued until he purified all parts of Arabia from associating partners with God. He is the proof of his own truth for his light is present in every age and true obedience to him purifies a person as the clear and transparent water of a river cleanses dirty linen. Who has come to us with a sincere heart and has not witnessed that light, and who has knocked honestly on that door for whom it has not been opened? But the pity is that most people prefer the lower [material] life and do not desire that the higher [spiritual] light should enter into them. [*Chashma Marifat*, (Qadian, Anwar Ahmadiyyah Press, 1908); Now published in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol. 23., p. 288-289]. ♦

Bai'at

On December 1st, 1888 Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahamad (AS) published an announcement that God had ordained him that whomsoever seeks true faith and piety, should take **Baiat, which is a pledge of allegiance** to him so that Allah may shower His mercy and beneficence on them.

On January 12th, 1889 he published a pamphlet in which he laid down ten conditions of Baiat for initiation into the Jamaat [i.e. congregation]. In this pamphlet he made it known that anyone who wishes to enter into this covenant of allegiance should swear to perform the following from the core of his heart:

- 1. That until the last day of his life, he shall abstain from shirk (associating any partners with Allah);**
- 2. That he shall keep away from falsehood, cruelty, adultery, dishonesty, disorder, rebellion and every kind of evil;**
- 3. That he shall offer prayers (Salat) five times daily;**
- 4. That he shall not inflict injury on any of Allah's creatures;**
- 5. That he would bear every hardship for the sake of Allah;**
- 6. That he shall not follow vulgar customs and guard against evil inclinations;**
- 7. That he shall discard pride and haughtiness, and live in humility & meekness;**
- 8. That he shall hold his faith, dignity, and the welfare of Islam dearer than his own life, wealth and children;**
- 9. That he shall have sympathy for all of God's creatures, and devote his talents to their welfare; and**
- 10. That he shall establish brotherhood with me (i.e. Ahmad), obeying me in all good things, and firmly adhere to these rules until the last breath of his life.**

Editorial

All faiths promote charity in various forms. In addition to the intrinsic desire in human beings to help others, the rewards in the hereafter by God are promised. Charity provides us satisfaction and a feeling of goodwill.

Islam has emphasized charity in a much more diversified manner. It describes that there are rights due to God and rights due to His creation. We not only need to worship God in one form or another, we must serve, love, help and share our wealth with His creation. Love of God without the love of humanity is baseless, groundless and self-deceiving.

Helping others in need must be rooted in our love of God because they are His creation. When we kiss a friend's child or give him a gift on his graduation, it is a reflection of our affection for a friend. Our love and affection with our friend intensifies when he sees us showing our love for his child.

The care for fellow human beings in Islam is without any religious, political, geographical, racial or gender boundaries. A Muslim's charity and help to a needy per-

son is not limited to other Muslims but must be extended to any needy person regardless of his faith. It is rooted in humanity.

We have presented a few articles in the current issue on topics relating to charity. It is essential for us to realize our duties and obligations under the current financial crises throughout the world. We need to look for ways and means to help our brothers and sisters who are part of our human family for the love of our Creator. The scope of our responsibility depends on whether we are a neighbor, a relative or a coworker in need of help. The same applies to the leaders of countries who can provide assistance to the less fortunate ones because all of their citizens must be extended the dignity of humanity.

The philosophy and teachings of charity in Islam is exemplified by the personal example of its founder, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, who gave everything he had in charity. In the month of Ramadhan, his charity exceeded all bounds.

We hope and pray that this time of year when we are fasting in the month of Ramadhan and enduring a financial crisis, we would avail the opportunity to give a helping hand to those in need. We hope, as insignificant as it may be, to promote the instinctively inherent value of charity among our readers, and for that, we pray God bless you all. ♦

Afghan law hurts Islam

The Muslim Sunrise condemns the recent law passed in Afghanistan that allows a husband to 'starve' his wife if she refuses to have sex with him.

Treating a woman in such a cruel and demeaning manner is a blatant violation of Islamic principles.

It is a great shame and disgrace for Muslims across the globe to tolerate such ignorance perpetrated in the name of their Faith.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} taught that women should be treated with love and dignity, and lived up to what he preached. His very example condemns these Afghan practices for the cruelty and torture that they are.

We take this opportunity to strongly condemn the hard line Muslim clerics and extremists who misrepresent Islam for their own personal gain. They are the main cause for the unrest and ignorance we see in the Muslim world today.

We welcome Ramadhan

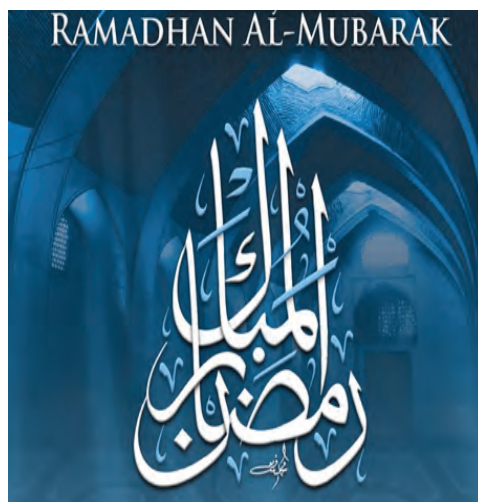
Fasting is a form of worship found in many religions. Although there are vast differences regarding the mode of fasting and the conditions applied to it, the reason for fasting is the same. Where it is not mentioned clearly, it is likely that it may gradually have either been discontinued, or have petered out through gradual decay in practice.

The case of Buddha is an interesting example. He started his quest for truth with a severe form of fasting, but later on it is said that he abandoned this practice because it had adversely affected his health. In view of this notion, one can understand why he discontinued, but this does not in any way indicate that he had ceased to believe in fasting. Perhaps that is why some Buddhists, still observe some form of fasting.

Fasting in Islam is a highly developed concept, and needs to be studied in depth. There are two types of injunctions with regards to fasting. One relates to obligatory fasting and the other to optional.

There is one full month in every year in which fasting is prescribed for Muslims all over the world. As the month is a lunar month, it keeps changing around the year in relation to the solar months. This creates a universal balance for the worshippers. Sometimes the fasting in winter months is easy as far as the days go, in comparison to the long winter nights, while during the summer months the days become long and exacting. As the lunar months keep rotating around the year, Muslims in all parts of the world have some periods of easy fasting and some arduous fasting.

The month of Ramadhan or fasting, begins everywhere at the first appearance of dawn, and ends with sunset. During this period one is expected to abstain from all food



and drink completely. It is not just physical hunger and thirst that constitute the Muslim fast, but the nights prior to the beginning of the fast acquire a far more important character and play a central role in the institution of fasting.

Muslims wake up many hours before dawn for individual prayer and the remembrance of God. Also the Holy Qur'an is recited in every Muslim house much more than in ordinary days. A greater part of the night is thus spent in spiritual exercises which form the very essence of fasting.

During the day, apart from restraining from food and water, Muslims are supposed to refrain from vain talk, quarrels and fights, or from any such occupation as is below the dignity of a true believer. No indulgence in carnal pleasure is allowed; even husband and wife during the day lead separate lives, except for the formal human relationship common to all people.

In Islam, alms-giving and care for the destitute is so highly emphasized that it becomes part of a Muslim's daily life. However when it comes to Ramadhan, Muslims are required to double their efforts in this field. It is reported of the Holy Prophet ^{saw}, that spending in the cause of the poor was a daily practice with him which has been likened unto a breeze, never ceasing to bring comfort and solace to the needy. However during Ramadhan, the reporters of the Ahadith-the sayings of the Prophet ^{saw} remind us that the breeze seemed to pick up speed and began to blow like strong winds.

The optional fasting is so well promoted that it becomes a part of the righteous Muslim's way of life. Although a majority of Muslims do not go beyond the month of obligatory fasting, some keep fasts now and then particularly when in trouble. As it is expected that the prayers offered in fasting are more productive, some people keep extra fasts to ward off their problems, but some do it only for the sake of winning Allah's special favors. There is no limit to this, except that the founder of Islam strongly discouraged those who had vowed to fast continuously for their whole life. When the Holy Prophet ^{saw} came to learn of one such case, he disapproved of the practice and censured the man for attempting to achieve liberation as if by forcing his will upon himself. He told the person concerned that: 'Just by putting yourself to trouble or discomfort, not only will you be unable to please God, but you may even earn His displeasure.' He pointed out that over-emphasis on austerity is likely to make one negligent towards one's wife and children, kith and kin, friends etc.

The Holy Prophet ^{saw} reminded him specifically of his responsibilities in the area of human relationships: 'Do your duty to God as well as the creation of God equitably' was the advice. To some, after their insistent petulant begging, he permitted optional fasts only in the style of David ^{as}. The Holy Founder of Islam told them that it was the practice of David ^{as} to fast one day and abstain from doing so the next. Throughout his life, after he made this vow, he kept the fast on alternate days. So the Holy Prophet ^{saw} said, 'I can only permit you that much and no more.'

The institution of fasting is extremely important because it cultivates the believer in almost every area of his spiritual life. Among other things, he learns through personal experience about what hunger, poverty, loneliness and discomforts mean to the less fortunate sections of society. Abstention from even such practices during the month of Ramadhan as are permissible in everyday life plays a constructive role in refining the human character.

Divine signs to distinguish the lofty station of the Promised Messiah

Summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, August 7, 2009

NOTE: Alislam Team takes full responsibility for any errors or miscommunication in this Synopsis of the Friday Sermon

Citing verse 16 of Surah Al Mu'min, the translation of which reads:

'The Exalter of ranks, the Lord of the Throne. He causes the spirit to descend with His command to whomsoever of His servants He pleases, that He may give warning of the Day of Meeting Him,' (40:16) Huzur gave a discourse on the Divine signs to distinguish the lofty station of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace).

The Rafi-ud-darajaat God (Exalter of ranks), Who possesses all excellent attributes declares that He sends His chosen people to revive the spiritually ailing. Those commissioned by Him inform people of the transitory nature of this world and of the everlasting Hereafter. They tell people to do those works in this life that please God. Just as God has sent His Prophets to each nation in each era, in the current age, He sent the Promised Messiah. This advent was in accordance with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and born out of his ardent love for the Prophet. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had said that the Mahdi would be guided by God and will come to put right the troubled world of Islam, guiding people to the straight path.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) received many revelations from God, among them two were the following: 'He sends down the Spirit on whomsoever He wills from among His servants.' (Tadhkirah, 2007 edition, p.764); and, 'You are to Me like My Spirit.' (Tadhkirah,



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

07edition, p.883). Indeed God exalts whomsoever He wishes to, from among His chosen people. As the Qur'an states in Surah Al An'am: '...We exalt in degrees of rank whomso We please. Thy Lord is indeed Wise, All-Knowing'. (6:84).

In order to carry out His spiritual system God sends Prophets and saints. His knowledge determines who should be sent with the special message. In this age, The Wise, All-Knowing God sent Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani. His advent has been cited in the Holy Qur'an with reference to latter days and ahadith speak of him as a significant sign for the Ummah as they are urged to accept him. Huzur said if the Muslims read this message with sincerity of heart there is no way they would not accept the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). Indeed, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had said that whoever lives in the age of the Mahdi should take my greetings to him. In one tradition related by the grandson of Hadhrat Imam Hussein, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said, 'for our Mahdi two signs, the like of which

have never appeared before will be evident'. The reference is of course to the solar and lunar eclipses. Huzur said while the mention of the extraordinary signs here signifies the station of the Messiah and Mahdi, the use of the term 'our Mahdi' by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) signifies the love and high regard he had for him.

Huzur said he would now speak about the station of the Mahdi who was promised to come and the signs which we observe in support of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani. God had promised to exhibit His signs of corroboration and to exalt the Mahdi. This promise was fulfilled when the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) made his claim and indeed is still being fulfilled. Prophets of God are always opposed and so was the Promised Messiah. His opposition continues to this day. He was granted a lofty station by God then Who continues to exalt him to this day. God revealed to him: 'Mercy flows from thy lips, 'O Ahmad. You are under Our care. Allah will exalt thy name and perfect His bounty upon thee in this world and the hereafter.' (Tadhkirah, edition '07, p. 72). Also, 'Allah will support thee, Allah will help thee. Allah has raised the argument of Islam. There is the beauty of Allah. He it is Who has purified you in every situation. The mysteries of the friends of Allah are without count.' (Tadhkirah, edition '07, p.127).

Huzur said, today, if one wishes to reach God, wishes to behold His beauty, then the way to do so is to adhere to the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Could one, who [God forbid] associated falsehood to God, have his glory enhanced by being false? Certainly, up till now, one who associated falsehood to God would have been disgraced. However, these are the words of God's true servant and this is the reason we observe that with each passing day his glory is enhanced further still. God states in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Al Inshirah: 'And removed from thee thy burden, Which had well nigh broken thy back,

And We exalted thy name?’ (94:3-5). God revealed to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace): ‘O Servant of the One Who exalts, I shall raise thee towards Me. I shall bestow honor on thee. None can stop that which I bestow.’ (Tadhkirah, edition ’07, p.159) and ‘I am with you, O Imam of high esteem.’ (Tadhkirah, edition ’07, p.624).

Huzur said the purpose of mentioning the revelations of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) here is that as God consoled him through these revelations, He also manifested earthly and heavenly signs of support. Each person of His Community, no matter where in the world he/she is, has come into the fold by virtue of his lofty station. God manifested countless signs to distinguish his lofty station and it is not possible to cite them all. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has mentioned a few of these signs in his book ‘Anjam e Atham’; a book that he wrote at the death of Abdullah Atham. His death was a sign of deterrent and it made the splendour of Islam and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) evident to the world. Atham was a Christian priest and many religious scholars and ‘custodians of shrines’ did not accept his death as a sign of the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). He, therefore, gave them the challenge of a Mubalahah (spiritual/prayer duel) and wrote two hundred pages, followed by an appendix and also a footnote. In the detailed footnote he mentioned the Divine support and honor bestowed on him after the Mubalahah. He wrote that in accordance with the Quranic phrase ‘end is for the God-fearing’ (11:50) a number of aspects were the source of his honor.

Firstly, the prophecy made about Abdullah Atham was literally fulfilled. This was a fulfilment of the prophecy published on page 241 of Baraheen e Ahmadiyya (Promised Messiah’s epic book) fifteen years before. Secondly, his collection of journals that he wrote in Arabic, including Anjam e Atham. None of these were responded by the opposing maulwis or the priests and the world saw that the honor of the Arabic language was applicable to the



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If one wishes to reach God, wishes to behold His beauty, then the way to do so is to adhere to the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

-- Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad



“Today the physical as well as the spiritual progeny of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) is spread all over the world. God granted lofty station to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and showed signs of His support at every occasion. He grants honor to whomsoever He wishes. He is fulfilling His promises made to the Promised Messiah to this day.”

-- Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) alone, whom they had the audacity to call a Kafir (a disbeliever). Their own ignorance of the Arabic language became apparent. Thirdly, prior to the Mubalahah, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had merely three to four hundred followers. Following the Mubalahah, the number ranged around eight thousand devotees. Pious spirited people came rushing to the fold of Ahmadiyyat. A most touching acceptance followed the Mubalahah. He wrote that angels were putting spiritual light into hearts and the Mubalahah had been a source of immense honor. Fourthly, as foretold for hundreds of years, the advent of the Messiah was to be accompanied by solar and lunar eclipses in the month of Ramadan. Never before had any Messianic claimant granted such heavenly signs. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote that while people prayed for his disgrace God had made the heavens bow down in his verification. Fifthly, the aspect that brought honor after the Mubalahah was that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) invited all his famous opponents to discuss the knowledge and cognisance of the Holy Qur'an but none could respond to him. He had announced that God had given him unique insight into the Qur'an; the silence of others sealed their ignorance.

Sixthly, following the Mubalahah, Abdul Haq had issued a leaflet maintaining that a son would be born to him. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) after being Divinely informed, also issued a leaflet stating that God would grant him a son. With the grace of God a son named Sharif Ahmad was born to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) who was nearly two years old at the time of writing. On the other hand, no son was born to Abdul Haq. Seventhly, what proved to be a sign of honor after the Mubalahah was the fervour displayed by the followers of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) in serving him. He said he could never thank God for the spiritual and physical bounties that showered on him following the Mubalahah. Among the material bounties, God pressed into the service of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) sincere and devoted people who considered it an honour to

spend their wealth in this cause. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) went on to mention a number of these sincere followers. He said it was with the sheer grace of God and although God had always provided for the Promised Messiah, after the Mubalahah, extraordinary spiritual and physical bounties were bestowed upon him. Eighthly, the aspect to enhance honor after the Mubalahah was the writing of the book 'Sat Bachan'. For the writing of this book, God facilitated for the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) what had not occurred to anyone for three hundred years. The book is about Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion and it proves that Baba Nanak was in fact a Muslim and believed in One God. He had performed Hajj twice. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) disclosed that his relic cloak had the Kalima and many Quranic verses inscribed on it. Huzur said the cloak is now in the safe possession of a Sikh family. A Bedi sahib of that family, who attended our Jalsa, had confirmed this. Ninthly, the aspect that was a source of greater honour following the Mubalahah was that eight thousand people had entered into the fold of the Community. As the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) was the centre of attraction for all this humanity, this was a clear sign of an acceptance which can only be attained by God's will. Their spirituality was much enhanced and they offered their Prayers with perfect devotion. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) went on to mention the sincere Jama'ats that had established in the towns and cities of Amritsar, Lahore, Sialkot, Kapurthala and other Indian cities and cited their shining spirituality. Huzur said he wished to say to people who are associated to these areas that they should always remember the sincerity of their ancestors. This will keep us connected to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and bring us the beneficence that God has promised. Huzur added that today similar sincerity is being generated all over the world, be it Europe, Asia or Africa. Tenthly, the source of honor for the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), after the Mubalahah, was the 'Conference of Great World Religions' in Lahore. Here, his treatise 'Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam' was read out. This was extremely well-received and left a profound impact

on all. It was stated that it saved the day for Islam. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said how could God put such sweetness and blessing into the words of an [alleged] disbeliever? Thus are the ten blessings as cited by the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) that God granted him after the Mubalahah.

Huzur said God has shown such signs on every occasion. He read out a few more extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) on the subject of fulfilment of signs given to him.

Today the physical as well as the spiritual progeny of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) is spread all over the world. God granted lofty station to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and showed signs of His support at every occasion. He grants honor to whomsoever He wishes. He is fulfilling His promises made to the Promised Messiah to this day. Certainly, He will also fulfil the promise that till the Day of Judgement He will grant triumph to his followers over others. Huzur said we should pray and ever try to stay connected to the Community. Time to time, our opponents demonstrate an outpouring of their malice. In Pakistan such has been the general situation that in the name of Islam, yet in clear defiance of the teachings of Islam, they continue to persecute and oppress. As a result the country is disgraced in the entire world. While they have failed in their wicked attempts to stop the Ahmadi from declaring their faith and worshipping God, the country is engulfed in disorder. Recently utter barbarity was committed in the name of Islam against some Christians. There is a general state of lawlessness. Ahmadi in general and Pakistani Ahmadi in particular should pray for the country which is in dire straits. As the situation there worsens and gets critical, Ahmadi, particularly Pakistani Ahmadi should pray, turn to God, seek His refuge, make your actions purely for the sake of God, give alms enthusiastically. It is God's promise that He will grant us progress. May God keep each Ahmadi safe from all evil and keep the Community safe in Pakistan and other places. After the UK Jalsa, authorities in some Arab countries are also harassing the Ahmadi. May God keep the faith of each Ahmadi strong. ♦



Basically, what are the differences between Ahmadi Muslims and mainstream Sunni Muslims?

A. There are three basic differences of belief held by Ahmadi Muslims which distinguishes them from mainstream Sunni Islam. These three beliefs pertain to:

1) The finality of Muhammad's Prophethood:

Ahmadi Muslims believe that prophets can appear after the advent of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}; however, such prophethood is subservient to the Law of the Qur'an and will appear from within Islam. A new prophet cannot bring a religious law nor a new faith.

2) Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven:

Ahmadis believe that Jesus Christ^{AS} died a natural death and is buried in Srinagar, Kashmir, whereas mainstream Sunni Muslims believe that he ascended bodily into heaven and someone else was crucified in his stead.

3) Identity of the Promised Messiah:

Ahmadis and mainstream Sunnis both believe in the second coming of Jesus^{AS} in the

latter days; however, Ahmadis do not believe he would physically be the same Jesus^{AS} who appeared two thousand years ago. Ahmadis believe this second coming would be spiritual in nature just as John^{AS} the Baptist was the "second coming" of Elijah^{AS}. Ahmadis also believe that the Promised Messiah would be called by other names, but he would be one and the same person. These other names include *Krishna, Buddha, Mahdi, Jesus son of Mary* and *Ahmad*.

What is meant by the "Promised Messiah"?

A. In the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, there are numerous references to the coming of a latter day reformer who will cleanse the religion of Islam of all unsupported customs and superstitions and restore its eminence and glory which it used to enjoy in the early days. This reformer is referred to by various names and titles in the Hadith such as:

- Mahdi
- Messiah
- Jesus son of Mary

The advent of this reformer is so vividly described in the Hadith literature and commentaries that Muslims of all sects and generations have been eagerly awaiting him. The general scholarly consensus was that he would appear in the 14th Islamic century, which interestingly enough, corresponds to the Christian prediction that Christ^{AS} would reappear in 1840 according to the prophecies in the Book of Daniel. It is now the 15th Islamic century.

Since one of the names used for this reformer in the Hadith is "Jesus son of Mary", many simple minded Muslims started believing that Jesus Christ^{AS} himself will reappear in the latter days of Islam. When Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{AS} proclaimed in 1890 that he was the Messiah whose advent was promised in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, a majority of the Muslims rejected his claim because they were looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ^{SAW} himself. In this respect these Muslims behaved like the Jews of two thousand years ago who rejected Jesus' claim to prophethood because they, too, were waiting for the second coming of the prophet Elijah^{AS}. However, Jesus^{AS} explained that John^{AS} the Baptist came in fulfillment of that prophecy.

After receiving many revelations to this effect, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{AS} declared in 1890 that he was the same Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}. He declared that he was in communion with God and constantly received His revelations and signs. Those revelations guided him to lay the foundation for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to dispel the myths about Islam, promote interfaith harmony and establish the Unity of God.

Please submit your questions about Islam to the Muslim Sunrise.

Muslims preparing for self-denial of Ramadan season

Mitch Pritchard
Staff writer

Dr. Naseer Tahir has been celebrating Ramadan his whole life, but don't think fasting during the day for a month ever gets any easier.

"No! It is still hard every year," said Tahir, 62, who is president of Baitun Naseer, an Ahmadiyya Muslim mosque on East Main Street, Rochester, NY,

"It is about saving your life, though. There is a reward after not eating and drinking, it helps you with your spiritual development."

Ramadan starts today and runs through Sept. 19. The celebration follows the lunar calendar, so it starts about 10 days earlier each year. Some years it is 29 days and others, 30.

During the month, Muslims fast from before dawn until after sunset. No eating, drinking or smoking, and Muslims must control their anger as well during this time.

"If you can't control your anger, then it is useless to simply stay hungry," said Tahir, who came to New York from Pakistan in 1972, moved to Rochester in 1978 and now runs his own pain treatment clinic in Brighton. "It is a month for self-discipline. If someone stays hungry and thirsty, but can't control their vulgar talk, it does no good. It is about uplifting your character."

Sikandar Shaikh, 63, of Pittsford echoed Tahir's thoughts on fasting.

"The toughest part is if the people around you are just having a jolly good time, it is not easy to fast," the native of India said. "If you work 8 to 5 outdoors, it's especially hard. If you work

Tahir said the Islamic faith is built around doing physical acts to make you stronger spiritually. He said the acts of five daily prayers or giving to charity all help you develop as a person and a Muslim in God's eyes.

in air-conditioning all day, it isn't as tough."

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All able-bodied Muslims must honor Ramadan. Those who are pregnant, sick or traveling do not have to fast during the celebration, but they must make the days up later on.

"You see people on TV that are dying of thirst but they won't take a drink because of Ramadan," Tahir said. "That is not the way it is supposed to be. Take a drink to save your life."

Ramadan is also used as a time for families and communities to slow down their busy lives and spend time together.

Muslims are discouraged from dragging the fasting out too long each day. Shortly before dawn and shortly after sunset, Muslims are encouraged to have a meal with their family. And on the weekends, places such as Tahir's mosque have large gatherings to celebrate the faith.

According to Tahir, fasting every day for a month doesn't even add up to a nice weight loss.

"I gain weight almost every year," he said. "It is even tougher during the summer months. I think I had a headache all month last year. The winter is great, much easier."

Shaikh, who worships at the Islamic Center on Westfall Road, thinks Ramadan and fasting in general can help cleanse your body. He said some people will fast from time to time throughout the year because they learn to enjoy it.

"You need to think of it as a good thing for one's health," he said. "It is a good time to not multitask."

Muslims have come under close scrutiny and many times suffered prejudices since 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Tahir said the peaceful celebration of Ramadan has become even more important during the troubled times. He believes the public view of Muslims is much better now, compared with the years right after the terrorist attacks.

But he is still bothered by radicals and terrorists who twist the Muslim belief that physical acts lead to a stronger spirituality. For example, he cites suicide bombers who are brainwashed into believing the act will benefit them in the afterlife.

"In our faith, you are held accountable for your actions when it comes time for judgment day," he said. "It says right in the Quran that those who commit suicide are hellbound. But power corrupts and religious power helps some control people's minds and their hearts. They lose rationality."

Tahir, however, thinks that the public now realizes that the radicals are a minority in the faith.

"History shows that this isn't the only time this has happened to a faith," he said.

"Hopefully over time, things will evolve and continue to get better." ♦

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Humanity First USA: Making a difference in the world today

By Iftikhar Ahmed



HUMANITY FIRST

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Books and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zaka’at; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing”.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 178)



The history: Humanity First (HF) was founded by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad(rah) Khalifatul Masih IV in 1994.

It was conceived with the back drop of hunger crisis in Somalia in 1992 and the war in Bosnia. This was the time when the Jama’at-e-Ahmadiyya tried to help the victims of these crises, but faced difficulties in serving them directly because of being a religious organization. We were forced to hand over the food and supplies to the western agencies working in those areas at the time. Hadhur was deeply touched by the situation. He perceived the need and opportunity for the Jama’at to establish an independent charitable organization to serve mankind, without any distinction of faith, race, or ethnicity. Humanity First was conceived and formally established as a result of this vision. Hadhur further advised the organizational leads that Humanity First should not limit itself to engaging Ahmadiis alone, but be inclusive of other noble souls as well.

Today, by the grace of Allah, Humanity First is established in over 25 countries in 6 continents of the world. It has served deserving communities and needy individuals in more than 35 countries so far. Although Humanity First is a “non-denominational” charity organization, its entire basis is ground in the uni-

versal Islamic values of justice and fairness, advocating the spirit of Ita’i Dhill-Qurba.

In the United States, Humanity First was formally incorporated in 2004, as a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization. As such, it is governed by an independent board of directors, and day to day operations are managed by a team of dedicated individuals with a diverse professional background. The team works collaboratively with Humanity First International and other country operations wherever there is a humanitarian need or crisis. This allows Humanity First to pool its resources and focus on making a significant difference in the lives of the impacted communities.

The scope: Humanity First USA (HF-USA) has two major focus areas of service; disaster relief and human development. By the grace of Allah, every time there is a need due to a natural disaster or HF appeals for help to pursue a community development project anywhere in the world, our community members and other supporters rush to donate and volunteer their time and skills.

Over a short period of time since its inception, HF has provided humanitarian relief to victims of several significant disasters around the world. These include major earthquakes in Turkey, Japan, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Peru. HF has also

provided major relief services for the Asian tsunami relief, Hurricane Katrina, Guyana floods, Hurricane Ike in the recent years.

In addition to the disaster relief programs, HF-USA is also focused on pursuing and expanding its human development programs. These typically include digging water wells in third world countries where lack of clean water can cause major hardship and health risks for the communities (Banner program: "Water for Life"). HF-USA has also helped rebuild and support several educational institutions in Indonesia, Guyana, and Liberia. Domestically in the US, Humanity First is helping several primary schools in poor neighborhoods in several parts of the country under its banner program of "Our Kids, Our Future".

Humanity First operations: HF-USA is blessed with a great team of dedicated volunteers who help run the day to day activities of the organization. Similar to the MTA model, our volunteers may bring professional expertise from their work life, or they may be new to the type of work assigned, but absolutely have the dedication to learn on the job and serve those in need. The major departments for HF-USA include operations, fundraising and marketing, Information technology, and administration. Since most of the team members are located in different parts of the country, most of the collaboration and information sharing happens through conference calls.

When a disaster strikes anywhere in the world, HF-USA's disaster monitoring team fires up into action. This team liaises with United Nations agencies and stays in touch through the initial phase of the disaster with the field response team. Our pool of volunteers consists of dedicated individuals from all walks of life who are willing to help out in whatever capacity they can. As one can imagine, a disaster response team needs people with a diverse skill set, including relief camp setup, communications, language skills, and resourceful logistics management.

Our Ahmadi doctors are one of our key resource strengths in these disaster relief efforts. On several occasions, large relief agencies such as Red Cross have end up supporting our volunteer physicians in the field as they provide medical treatments to the affected residents in the

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disaster area.

HF-USA also engages in several non-disaster related initiatives throughout the year. These initiatives may come out of a post disaster need for sustainable development, or address an ongoing need in a local deserving community. For example, HF-USA has been actively involved in providing clear drinking water to communities in Pakistan, Indonesia, and Africa. These projects typically include digging new wells, refurbishing existing water wells or setting up water filtration plants.

All of these humanitarian initiatives require a regular stream of donations coming in. Our Jama'at members are the solid base of donors and volunteers, and this base is growing rapidly by the grace of Allah. HF-USA takes pride in the fact that it keeps the overheads low by pursuing fundraising and awareness campaigns through emails, Jamaat events, and very specific campaigns. HF-USA organizes annual walks in various cities around the US and they help raise funds for the major initiatives. There is also a recurring donation program where a donor can setup a fixed amount to be donated on a regular basis. These recurring donors help the organization a lot since there is a predictable flow of donations as a result of this, and it also helps keep the fundraising overheads low.

The potential: There is no doubt that the Ahmadiyya community's record of humanitarian service is commendable. Especially considering that it is a community that primarily comes from humble background and resources. But, our work

in the area of humanitarian services is far from over. Today, we live in a world where more than 9 million children born alive die before their fifth birthday. Most of these children live in developing countries and die from a disease or a combination of diseases that could be easily prevented or treated -- antibiotics for pneumonia, for example, or a simple mix of salts and sugars for diarrhoea. Malnutrition contributes to over a third of these deaths.

Today, we live in the United States of America, the most developed country in the world. In this country, on any given day, more than 800,000 people all over the country are homeless; one fourth of them are children. Similarly, more than 100 thousand patients, at any given time, are struggling to survive as they wait for an organ donation of some kind.

One of the most disturbing and extraordinary aspects of life in our country is the persistence of hunger. More than 35 million US residents live in households considered to be facing a situation called "food insecure". People that fall into this category have struggled with having enough food for their household. They often skip meals, eat less than what their bodies need, and this includes adults and children alike.

Humanity First is always looking for ways to serve mankind facing these tough challenges and depends on volunteers and donors to support in this worthy cause. May Allah enable us to consider our responsibilities, face these challenges, and always consider Ita'i dhil Qurba when we serve those in need (Ameen).

About the author: Iftikhar Ahmed has been part of the Humanity First management team since its inception in 2004. He has served in the capacity of marketing and IT director in the early days of HF-USA, volunteered in the relief operations in post-Asian tsunami rebuilding initiatives in Indonesia's Aceh region, and currently serves as the director of development for the organization. In his professional life, Iftikhar is a senior manager at a fortune 500 hi-tech company in San Francisco bay area in California, where he resides with his wife and two children. ♦



Intelligent Design Movement: A Branch of Philosophy

Zia H Shah MD

"Let no man out of weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well-studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficiency in both." Sir Charles Darwin

Intelligent Design (ID) cannot be mentioned in biology classes in Dover, PA public school district, a U.S. Dis-

trict Judge John E. Jones III ruled in 2005, ruling in one of the biggest courtroom clashes on evolution since the 1925 Scopes trial.

The federal court in this case ruled that ID was not clearly distinct from 'creationism' and therefore should be excluded from the curriculum in public schools on the basis of earlier decisions. The judge decided that the school district violated the Constitution when they ordered that the schools biology curriculum must include the notion that life on


Earth was produced by an 'unidentified intelligent cause.' The Dover policy required students to hear a statement about intelligent design before ninth-grade biology lessons on evolution. The statement said Charles Darwin's theory is 'not a fact' and has inexplicable 'gaps.' It refers students to an ID textbook, 'Of Pandas and People,' for more information.

It seemed that the school board, under influence of ID, had failed to realize that the 'unidentified intelligent cause,' if it be God, cannot be observed at work in a scientific paradigm. To phrase it differently, ID seeks to fundamentally redefine science to accept supernatural explanations in addition to natural causes. ID is also bad religion as all the monotheistic religions believe in a transcendent God that is beyond matter space and time. The school board and the ID proponents had once again confused the boundary between science, religion and metaphysics. What they were proposing to teach in biology class could be taught in philosophy or religion class but not in a class of science or biology.

"The citizens of the Dover area were poorly served by the members of the Board who voted for the ID Policy," Jones wrote. The plaintiffs challenging the policy argued that intelligent design amounts to a secular repackaging of creationism, which the courts have already ruled cannot be taught in public schools. The judge agreed.

"We find that the secular purposes claimed by the Board amount to a pretext for the Board's real purpose, which was to promote religion in the public school classroom," he wrote in his 139-page opinion.

The dispute is the latest chapter in a long-running debate over the teaching of evolution dating back to the famous 1925 Scopes or Monkey



Trial, in which Tennessee biology teacher John T. Scopes was fined \$100 for violating a state law that forbade teaching evolution. The Tennessee Supreme Court reversed his conviction on a technicality, and the law was repealed in 1967.

The Encyclopedia Britannica online has the following to say about this movement: "Intelligent design was formulated in the 1990s, primarily in the United States, as an explicit refutation of the theory of biological evolution advanced by Charles Darwin (1809–82). Building on a version of the argument from design for the existence of God advanced by the Anglican clergyman William Paley (1743–1805), supporters of intelligent design observed that the functional parts and systems of living organisms are 'irreducibly complex,' in the sense that none of their component parts can be removed without causing the whole system to cease functioning. From this premise, they inferred that no such system could have come about

through the gradual alteration of functioning precursor systems by means of random mutation and natural selection, as the standard evolutionary account maintains; instead, living organisms must have been created all at once by an intelligent designer."

As a prominent United States Supreme Court justice once noted, your freedom to swing your arm stops where my nose begins; in the same vein, there are definite boundaries between religion, science and philosophy. However, a certain amount of humility is in order to comprehend the distinction between religion, science and metaphysics. This is what should be read in these words of Sir Charles Darwin, as he quoted Francis Bacon from his

book Advancement of learning in the later editions of Origin of Species to establish the proper relationship between religion and natural sciences: "Let no man out of weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well-studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works; divinity or philosophy;

ID proponents fail to realize that Allah always works through natural mechanisms, and not through super-natural miracles in violation of the natural laws. One of the attributes of Allah is the Hidden or Al-Batin. The attribute Al-Batin implies that Allah does not reveal himself directly and works through the laws of nature.

but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficiency in both."

To show what happens when religion and science are inappropriately mixed, let us review the doctrine of the spherical shape of the earth, and therefore the existence of the antipodes, was bitterly attacked by theologians in the medieval times, who asked: 'Is there anyone so senseless as to believe that crops and trees grow downwards? That the rains and snow fall upwards?' Andrew Dickson White wrote in A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom, published in 1922, "The doctrine of the antidote continued to have life, is shown by the fact that in the sixth century Procopius of Gaza attacks it with tremendous argument. He de-

clares that, if there be men on the other side of the earth, Christ must have gone there and suffered a second time to save them; and therefore, that there must have been there, as necessary preliminaries to his coming, a duplicate Eden, Adam, Serpent, and Deluge."

Similar thought processes had led to the burning of the books of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) by the fundamentalists and in so doing they had shut the Muslims from scientific progress and ushered several centuries of darkness. Europe was trying to recover from its dark cloud but the violence of the religious fundamentalists had not yet completely abated in the 18th century. Joseph Priestly was a chemist who had created a big name for himself for discovering oxygen and carbon dioxide. But he was as notorious in Europe as he was famous. He received his notoriety from writing a book: History of the Corruptions of Christianity originally published in 1782. Priestley was besieged by mobs in Birmingham, England, and having lost both his home and his laboratory to their fury, had

to retreat in 1791 to London. Similar hysteria can be created today in the disguise of creationism or ID movement unless the moderates understand the issues and realize what is at stake. The fundamentalists have not given up in recent times. The present day 'evolution wars' are a stark reminder of the consequences of not acknowledging where the 'nose' of the other domain starts.

For a thousand years before the Renaissance, the Christian Church had ruled Europe with an iron hand. Intolerance, prejudice, suspicion and superstition had made scholarly learning an impossibility. Suspicious of every attempt at independent thinking, the Church violently suppressed all



Science is the study of matter, space and time. The God of Islam, Judaism and Christianity is viewed as a supreme, transcendent being, beyond matter, space and time. So no matter how you slice it, and how advanced science is, it cannot lead to God directly; only through inference.

teaching that was not in direct conformity with its teachings. Religious tribunals sentenced tens of thousands of suspected witches and heretics to death by torture. Convicts were tied between horses and torn apart, disemboweled, hung or burnt at the stake. Strange things can happen when religion and politics are combined with science. Even the dead are not forgiven in these circumstances. The famous Archbishop Usher (1581–1656) had concluded from his study of the Bible that the world began at 9 a.m., Sunday 23 October 4004 B.C. This was despite the fact that a long dead scientist, John Wycliffe, (1329-1384) had provided evidence based on fossils and geology that the earth was at least some hundred thousand years old. For this crime and for translating the Bible into English, John Wycliffe books were burnt and after his body rested for nearly 50 years in the grave, the Bishop of Lincoln ordered that his remains be exhumed and unceremoniously burned in 1429. The ashes were dispatched with contempt into the local river.

The 'evolution wars,' appear to be legal and political issues only at the present time but they have the potential of evolving into more violent phenomena, if so permitted. Consider the case of the abortion debate. Prior to Roe versus Wade, it was a legal issue. But since that landmark decision in 1973, the negotiation has hit a violent tone. Dr. George Tiller, one of the nation's few providers of late-term abortions, was killed in June of 2009, shot in a church where he was serving as an usher. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. There have been more than

6,100 acts of violence against abortion providers in the United States and Canada since 1977, and four doctors have been killed. Religious zeal can inappropriately spill into science and politics and then blood begins to be spilled in the streets.

Francis Collins who was head of the Human Genome Project and is nominee to lead the NIH now, wrote in his book *The Language of God*, "The primary utility of a theory is not just to look back but to look forward." ID does not yield any new hypotheses that can be investigated by scientific process. Though some of the premises of ID are true but it is not a scientific theory. It is a philosophical or metaphysical thought! The proponents of ID seem to be invoking God for what is not known to the present day scientists. ID proponents fail to realize that Allah always works through natural mechanisms, and not through super-natural miracles in violation of the natural laws. One of the attributes of Allah is the Hidden or *Al-Batin*. The attribute *Al-Batin* implies that Allah does not reveal himself directly and works through the laws of nature.


What is science?

Science is the study of matter, space and time. The God of Islam, Judaism and Christianity is viewed as a supreme, transcendent being, beyond matter, space and time. So no matter how you slice it, and how advanced science is, it cannot lead to God directly; only through inference. However, this simple concept escapes many a proponents with different agenda.

Paul Davies writes in the *Mind of God*, "Modern philosophy has been strongly influenced by the work of Karl Popper. ... When a new discovery is made, scientists tend to work backward to construct hypotheses consistent with that discovery, and then go on to deduce other consequences of those hypotheses that can in turn be experimentally tested. If anyone of these predictions turns out to be false, the theory has to be modified or abandoned. The emphasis is thus on falsification, not verification. A powerful theory is one that is highly vulnerable to falsification, and so can be tested in many detailed and specific ways. If the theory passes those tests, our confidence in the theory is reinforced. A theory that is too vague or general, or makes predictions concerning only circumstances beyond our ability to test, is of little value."

In the Dover trial Judge John E. Jones III ruled that teaching intelligent design in public-school science classes is an unconstitutional violation of church and state. This case mirrored *McLean v. Arkansas*. In both trials, the presiding federal judges went further than was necessary in making their rulings. Not only did the jurists rule creation science and ID as unconstitutional entanglements of government with religion, which would have been sufficient to decide each case, (as Judge Jones admitted in his decision), but they also labeled them as not science. In doing so, they were forced to define science-something on which neither scientists nor philosophers have been able to reach a consensus.

In Arkansas, Judge William R.



Overton relied mainly on the testimony of philosopher Michael Ruse and defined science as follows:

- (1) It is guided by natural law;
- (2) It has to be explained by reference to natural law;
- (3) It is testable against the empirical world;
- (4) Its conclusions are tentative, that is, are not necessarily the final word;
- (5) It is falsifiable.

In religion the source of knowledge is revelation and not human observation.

The truth of such knowledge can be philosophically proven but not objectively demonstrated. What is science? More than simply a body of knowledge or collection of facts, science is a means of inquiry. But what distinguishes scientific inquiry from other ways we humans gain understanding of ourselves and the universe? Listen in as seven scientists, philosophers, and educators reflect on the essence of science, and why evolution qualifies while ID does not: "<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/id/defining.html>"

ID: A branch of metaphysics

Metaphysics is a term, which means literally 'what comes after physics.' So, it is a branch of philosophy that studies the ultimate structure and constitution of reality, correlating religion and science. Metaphysics investigates principles of reality transcending those of any particular science, cosmology and ontology. It is concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the universe.

As ID is not falsifiable, it is not sci-

ence and is a branch of philosophy and more specifically of metaphysics. In the three great monotheistic religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, God is viewed as a supreme, transcendent being, and yet the foundation of all that meets our senses that is described in terms of matter, space, and time. That is the Al-Batin or the Hidden God of monotheism. The transcendent being by definition is not amenable to human observation in a scientific paradigm. So, the hypothesis that God or some other intelligent entity created the world, cannot be directly studied in a scientific paradigm, but it can certainly be inferred indirectly in a philosophical paradigm. Hence it is a subject that belongs in metaphysics classes and not in science or biology classes.

According to Francis Collins, they are proposing a 'God of the gaps' theory. They seem to be invoking God for what is not known to the present day scientists. Collins also suggested that ID proponents have confused the unknown with the unknowable.

Epilogue

The concepts of ID in some respects are similar to the Islamic teachings, but there are some differences in the details. The Islamic concept can be dubbed as Theistic Evolution (TE) that has been explained by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadra in his book, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*. Some of the details of Theistic Evolution have also been described in the issue of November, 2007 Al-Islam eGazette. Francis Collins' book *The Language of God*, uses the term TE and a synonym BioLogos and explains its merits over ID. The main difference between TE and ID is that the former does not want to interfere with science and considers itself a part of philosophy rather than science. One can see the seeds of TE even in the writings of Sir Charles Darwin himself:

"I see no good reasons why the views given in this volume (*Origin of Species*)

should shock the religious feelings of any one. It is satisfactory, as showing how transient such impressions are, to remember that the greatest discovery ever made by man, namely, the law of the attraction of gravity, was also attacked by Leibnitz, 'as subversive of natural, and inferentially of revealed, religion.' A celebrated author and divine has written to me that 'he has gradually learned to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws.'

Those who saw the movie, *Inherit the Wind*, showing Scopes or Monkey trial in 1925, about Creationism, may be ready for its sequel. To further explore the religion and science behind ID, watch a PBS movie, *Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial*. But, why is it so important to make the fine distinctions between religion, science and philosophy? This is examined in the Al-Islam eGazette of July 2009: "www.alislam.org/egazette."◆

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Sayings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}

From *Sahih Bukhari*, the Book of Marriage:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The worst food is at a wedding banquet to which only the rich are invited and the poor are not invited. And he who refuses a marriage invitation disobeys Allah and His Apostle. (Hadith # 106)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor. And I advise you to take care of women, for they are created from a rib and the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break, and if you leave it, it will remain crooked, so I urge you to take care of the women.” (Hadith #114)

Narrated ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar:

The Prophet said, “Everyone is a guardian and all of you are responsible for your trusts. A ruler is a guardian and is responsible for his people; a man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for his family; a wife is a guardian of her husband’s home and she is responsible for it, a slave is a guardian of his master’s property and is responsible for it. Beware! All of you are guardians and will be held to account.” (Hadith # 116)

Islamic Solution to Third World Debt

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

Thomas Geoghegan recently penned an enlightening piece on the global economic recession's cause in Harper's Magazine. A former Congressional district candidate, Geoghegan argued that usury inherent in our economic system is to blame.

Geoghegan argues that up to the 1970s, interest rates were capped to avoid capital leaving tangible industries (e.g. manufacturing) which engender competition and technological development. Without interest caps, finance became more lucrative. GM and General Electric even created banks to remain competitive, these banks generating more capital than manufacturing. That is, finance began competing with manufacturing instead of facilitating it! Loss of real wage growth because of the lack of jobs meant loans went unpaid. Usury further encouraged bankers to lend to those more likely not to pay back the loan – the subprime demographic. Defaulting became profitable because banks could accrue more interest. Usury-based finance ultimately created infinite debt and the current economic crisis.

But what does this have to do with the 'Third World'? The 'Third World' (100+ countries), generally understood to be those countries with the lowest per capita income levels and human development indexes, has suffered and is neck-deep in debt precisely because of the same predatory financial practices.

Debt – An Ideological Construct

High school students learn in history class of the era of colonialism, where European countries conquered Africa and Latin America, thereby stripping the people of their natural resources and rights. When conquering nations finally departed, they left their victims with a

Former economic policy maker John Perkins explains that the Third World is often times tricked, even coerced, into taking out large developmental loans from financial institutions or governments.



When the public cannot pay back the loan, the lending institution demands compensation: either through the cheap use of the debtor's natural resources, or to support its political ambitions.

ravaged country and an enormous debt burden.

Today, developing countries' debt is largely due to the unjust transfer of debts of the colonizing states. Referred to as odious debt, this form of colonialism has the following characteristics: (1) a despotic power incurred the debt;¹ (2) the loan was used in a manner that did not further the interests of the state; (3) the creditor had prior knowledge that the loans would run contrary to the interests of the nation²; and (4) the debt was incurred without the consent of the people.³

Former economic policy maker John Perkins explains that the Third World is often times tricked, even coerced, into taking out large developmental loans from financial institutions or governments. The problem is that these loans are aimed at projects benefitting only a very elite section of the country (e.g. power plants, distribution systems, ports, industrial parks, etc.). While investments are privatized cost is subsidized as the loans, pegged to usurious rates, cannot be paid and the public is forced to foot the bill. When the public cannot pay back the loan, the lending institution demands compensation: either through the cheap use of the debtor's natural resources, or to support its political ambitions. Perkins himself documents his experience in the early 1970's while dictating Ecuador's financial plan. Ninety percent of the loans Ecuador took out would pay contracting companies and infrastructure that benefited only the wealthy. Today Ecuador sets aside more than 50% of its budget to debt payment.⁴

World renowned intellectual Prof. Noam Chomsky cites Indonesia as another example. Chomsky notes that as late as 2000, Indonesia's debt was approximately 140 percent of its GDP – it owed more than it produced! The debt was a result of the dictatorship's cronies borrowing from international banks. Chomsky further points out that the money owed to the lending institution, in this case the IMF, has been socialized – meaning the public has to pay the bill. The debtors are protected from the risk, as are the lenders, because the public will always be forced to bail them out.⁵ Due to usurious rates attached to the loans, Indonesia, as of 2006, had already paid



Hon. El Hadji Guissé, a Senegalese justice, issued a working paper to the United Nations Economic and Social Council summarizing the situation. The paper noted that debt has crippled the developing world's economic, political, and social ambitions for fifty years and continues to subjugate these nations despite the absence of colonial powers.

twice the level of recorded debt.⁶ These and so many other countries⁷ are essentially paying for their own repression.

Joseph Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel Economic Laureate and former Chief Economist of the World Bank, notes that enormous amounts of debt were generated due to the IMF. Stiglitz points out that the IMF's

parasitic lending practices essentially spurred on the East Asian and Argentinian financial crises, as well as sub-Saharan Africa's failed development.⁸

Hon. El Hadji Guissé, a Senegalese justice, issued a working paper to the United Nations Economic and Social Council summarizing the situation. The paper noted that debt has crippled the developing world's economic, political, and social ambitions for fifty years and continues to subjugate these nations despite the absence of colonial powers. Today, nearly 80% of the world suffers from this plight.⁹

Where Do We Go From Here?

With odious debt the major culprit in ensuring the Third World remains so, it seems natural to cancel such debt outright. We find a precedent for debt cancellation from the likes of Aristotle who justified it in the following scenario: "a democracy tak[es] the place of an oligarchy or despotism. . . persons refuse either to meet the contracts in hand on the ground that it was not the State, but the despot who entered upon them, or to perform any similar obligation . . ." ¹⁰ Former US representative to the IMF, Karen Lissaker has also recognized the cancellation of odious debt. Lissaker, an international economist, argued that if we were to apply the principles of odious debt, most of the Third World debt would disappear.¹¹

Debt cancellation has been practically observed as well. Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} himself absolved everyone under his rule of any usurious-based debt. During his final address to the Meccans in 631 C.E, he declared, "Truly, the usury of the Era of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) has been laid aside forever, and the first usury I begin with is that which is due to my father's brother 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib."¹² In recent years, when Cuba gained independence from Spain in 1898, America enforced Cuba's debt cancellation as 1) most debt was hostile to Cuban independence; 2) the debt ensured Spanish dominance; 3) the debt was imposed on Cuba without its consent; and 4) the Spanish knew that the loans were used for this purpose and should have been aware of the risks of non-repayment.¹³ The U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment also includes a war debt

exception with respect to the debts the Confederate States incurred to finance their rebellion.¹⁴ In the Tinoco Arbitration of 1923, Costa Rica gained independence from Great Britain.¹⁵ Creditors who maintain war debt, defined as “creditors who lend money for the purpose of carrying on a war, or when a war is ‘notoriously imminent,’ are investing in a doubtful security.”¹⁶ War debt, consequently, has also been cancelled. One example is during the annexation of the Boer Republics in 1900 and the World War I peace treaties of 1919.¹⁷ The same principle is being explored regarding Iraq today.¹⁸

Despite the precedent, one cannot simply cancel odious debt. If countries with corrupt regimes have their debt cancelled, the regime has no incentive to curb its behavior – a phenomenon referred to as ‘moral hazard.’ Moreover, no progress can be made if the entire world economy does not insist on observing the same policy regarding a despot regime (e.g. Sudan and Myanmar finding clients in China and Russia).¹⁹ Furthermore, debt cancellation alone absolves the lending institution of any wrongdoing.

Therefore, many economists and legal scholars, such as Steve Mandel,²⁰ Omri Ben-Shahar, Mitu Gulati,²¹ Christiana Ochoa,²² Tom Ginsburg, Thomas S. Ulen, and Larry Backer,²³ have argued for a shift from a concept of odious debt to odious lending. As the majority of these loans were knowingly given to corrupt and unaccountable regimes, the loaning institutions should be held accountable for sustaining a criminal regime. Lending institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank currently lack accountability and government oversight, reaching decisions without public debate, beyond the reach of international law.

Still, for those emerging from corrupt regimes, truly odious debt must be cancelled. Furthermore, to curb odious lending loaning institutions must be forced to pay restitution to the aggrieved nations.²⁴

In addition, in Islam revamping the economic system is a part of a larger socio-moral issue. Usury-based finance fosters a parasitic culture that rewards impatience, greed, deception, and failure. A consumer culture is born whereby individuals are empowered to spend far beyond their means to indulge in luxuries otherwise inaccessible to them. When this culture pervades those in charge of unstable regimes, borrowing from the country's future creates a spending of unrealized earnings, trying to pay off unending debt, and ultimately destroying the economy. Con-

sumers basically buy items with debt! As many debt-holders default on their loans, the system eventually gridlocks and the innocent suffer – as the current crisis bears witness to. In this system you privatize profit while spreading cost.

Mainstream economists such as John Keynes opine that usury can indirectly spur on long-term inflation. Keynes argued that the money supply is the main reason for inflation. The economic consequences are clear – the more money that exists, the less valuable it is, and the higher the price of goods. In this environment, loans become more desirable, deepening the cycle. Reducing purchasing power, usury slows industries and shuts down economies. Long-term projects and investments are discouraged because money's value is suspect. Inflation eventually means tangible goods are hoarded because money becomes worthless.

The socio-moral consequences may be less apparent. When predatory lending habits pervade international finance, nations eventually default on the loans and war ensues. No sense of community or sacrifice exists. This is what the Qur'an (2:280) refers to when declaring those who engage in usury are at war with God. In essence, your behavior conflicts with the natural order.

In place of the present economic order, Islam presents a virtue-based financial model. Instead of usury, Islam promotes joint-business ventures, share-holding and taxes to circulate capital. Money is not subject to hyperinflation, so the innocent are immune from the reckless behavior of others. No incentive exists to defraud anyone because everyone is equally liable. Risk, unlike at present, does not remain underpriced. The lender will only profit from a successful business venture because a loan defaulting means he has lost his investment. In turn, only the honest survive – a benign ‘survival of the fittest’ if there ever was one. Also, weaker nations are not exploited and a few parties cannot amass a majority of the wealth because unlike capitalism, an Islamic economy taxes idle

capital. Money remains private property so long as it is being circulated amongst the public; otherwise you are violating the notion of ‘community.’ During economic crises when production suffers, the lender cannot benefit from the debtor sitting on his loan. This allows for more flexibility in completing projects. In this system you privatize cost while spreading profit.

In sum, the crisis the Third World suffers from today is the product of usury-based finance which has created an immoral economic order. To absolve the Third World of debt, the world needs a holistic solution – an Islamic solution.

Footnotes:

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³ Sack, supra note 19, at 159 (citing Moore, supra note 19, at 359)

⁴ Perkins, John. *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*. 2004

⁵ Barsamian, David *Propaganda and the Public Mind*. p. 125;

“Talking ‘Anarchy’ With Chomsky”, *The Nation* Apr. 2000

⁶ Mandel, Steve. “Odious Lending: Debt Relief as if Morals Mattered”, *New Economics Foundation*

⁷ Abbasi, Kamran. “Free the Slaves: Debt Relief for the World's Poorest is Feasible but May Not Happen” *BMJ*. 1999 June 12;

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⁸ Stiglitz, Joseph. *Globalization and its Discontents*. 2002

⁹ Guissé, El Hadji. “Effects of debt on human rights” *UN Sub Commission on Human Rights* (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/27)

¹⁰ *Aristotle's Politics*. p. 162 (W.E. Bolland trans., Longmans, Green & Co. 1877)

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¹² Ibn Ishaq. “Muhammad's Farewell Address” *Sirat Rasulallah*, Guillaume's translation, p. 651

¹³ O'Connell, Law of State Succession, supra note 14, at 188–89

¹⁴ U.S. Const. Amend. XIV, § 4

¹⁵ Tinoco, supra note 26, at 148

¹⁶ O'Connell, Law of State Succession, supra note 14, at 189.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 190-191

¹⁸ Ochoa, Christiana. “From Odious Debt to Odious Finance: Avoiding the Externalities of a Functional Odious Debt Doctrine” *Harvard International Law Journal* / Vol. 49/#1 Winter 2008 pp. 109-59

¹⁹ Albert Choi and Eric Posner, A Critique of the Odious Debt Doctrine (U. Chi. L. & Econ., Olin Working Paper No. 323, 2007)

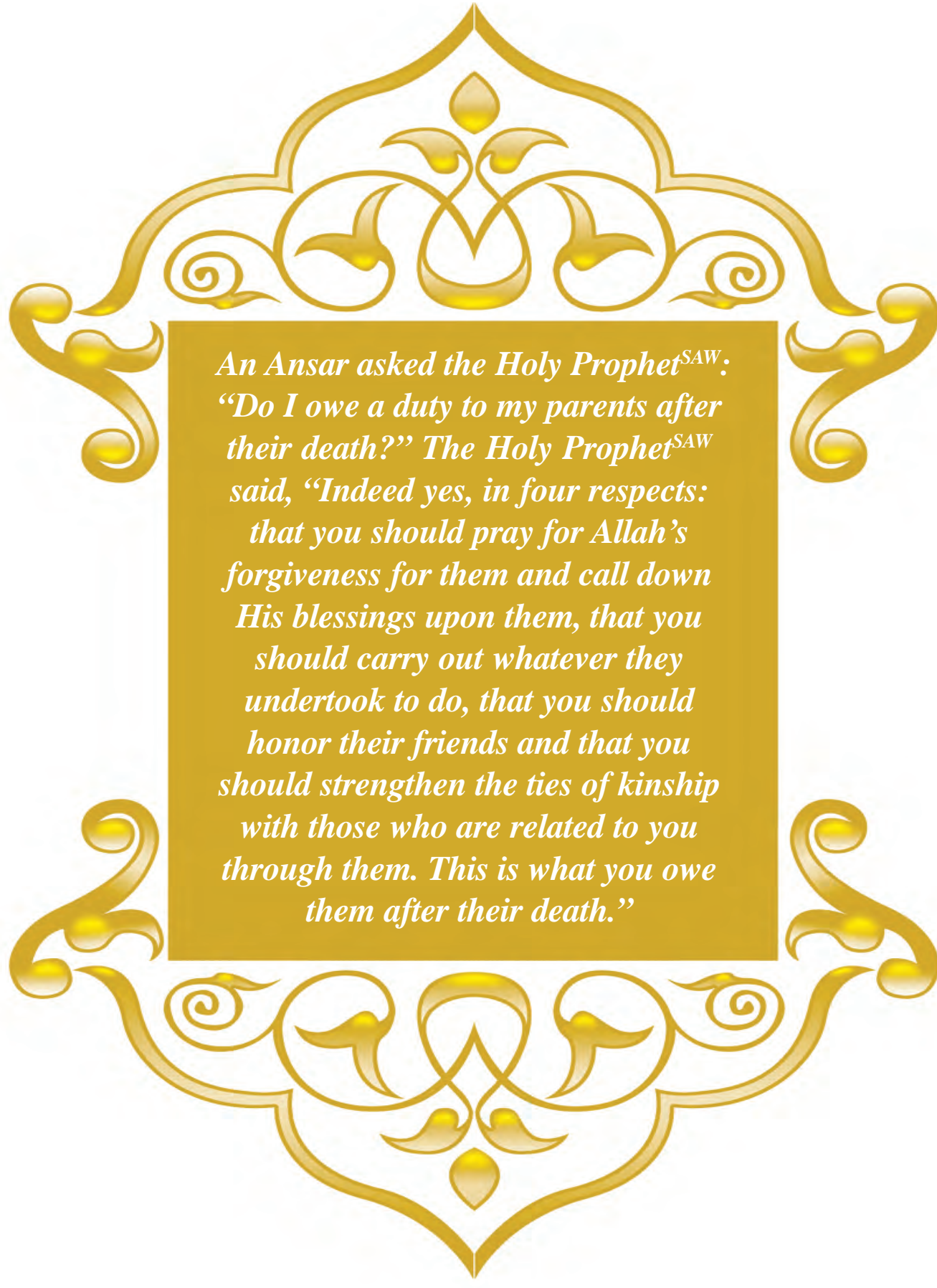
²⁰ Mandel, Steve. “Odious Lending: Debt Relief as if Morals Mattered”, *New Economics Foundation*

²¹ Omri Ben-Shahar & Mitu Gulati, Partially Odious Debts?: A Framework for an Optimal Liability Regime, 71 *L AW & Contemp. Probs.* (2007)

²² Ochoa, Christiana. “From Odious Debt to Odious Finance: Avoiding the Externalities of a Functional Odious Debt Doctrine” *Harvard International Law Journal* / Vol. 49/#1 Winter 2008 pp. 109-59

²³ Tom Ginsburg & Thomas S. Ulen, “Odious Debt, Odious Credit, Economic Development and Democratization” (Univ. of Ill. Law & Econ. Research Paper No. LE07-014, 2007)

²⁴ David Gray, Devilry, Complicity and Greed: Transitional Justice and Odious Debt, 71 *LAW & Contemp. Probs.* (2007)



*An Ansar asked the Holy Prophet^{SAW}:
“Do I owe a duty to my parents after
their death?” The Holy Prophet^{SAW}
said, “Indeed yes, in four respects:
that you should pray for Allah’s
forgiveness for them and call down
His blessings upon them, that you
should carry out whatever they
undertook to do, that you should
honor their friends and that you
should strengthen the ties of kinship
with those who are related to you
through them. This is what you owe
them after their death.”*



Social Services in Islam...

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.

The Holy Qur'an establishes two types of fundamental rights: Haqooq-ul-Allah (rights of God), and Haqooq-ul-Ibaad, (rights of God's servants). Social services fall under the Quranic category of Haqooq-ul-Ibaad -- duties discharging the rights of fellow human beings. The ultimate goal of the Qur'an is to establish a universal

brotherhood on equal footing among people belonging to all ethnicities, languages, geographical territories and cultures. Serving others out of selfless love, compassion and sympathy is merited with highest spiritual rewards in this life and in Hereafter. Social services are, according to the Holy Qur'an, an essential part of God's worship and a tremendous source of winning God's love.

The Holy Qur'an teaches

that social services need to be performed not only by individuals, but also by collective community efforts. Individuals are asked to serve others in accordance with their natural ties with those who are close to them – parents, spouses, children, relatives, friends and neighbors. In addition, the Holy Qur'an encourages formation of organizations for charitable acts, promotion of education, community counseling and

settlement of disputes at national and international levels ⁽¹⁾. Anyone without a source of income, including orphans, widows and refugees, are the responsibility of the community to be helped in their financial needs. The Muslim community is required to serve others collectively by removing poverty, illiteracy, crime, and disease. The Holy Qur'an persuades the believers to promote good and to refrain committing malicious and hurtful acts towards others ⁽²⁾. "Let there be from among you a party whose business be to invite to goodness, to enjoin equity and to forbid evil. It is they who shall prosper" ⁽³⁾. "You are the best people for you have been raised for the benefit of mankind" ⁽⁴⁾.

An individual can perform social service through the use of his or her talent, time and money. Depriving people of even small benefits is condemned by the Holy Qur'an ⁽⁵⁾. Giving sadaqah (voluntary charity) is enjoined by the Holy Qur'an, and its recipients are clearly identified: "The sadaqah are only for the poor and the needy, and those (officials) employed (for its collection and disbursement), and for those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and for the freeing of slaves, and for those in debt, and for the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer – an ordinance from Allah. And Allah is All-knowing, Wise" ⁽⁶⁾. The Holy Qur'an directs giving of alms for purification of hearts as well ⁽⁷⁾. Moreover, during the Hajj (i.e. Pilgrimage) sadaqah is an obligatory expiation for physical inability to perform some of the religious practices ⁽⁸⁾. Feeding of the poor is expiation for those who may not find it easy to fast in the month of Ramadhaan ⁽⁹⁾. The rich are urged to be moderate in personal consumption of food and drink so that they may save money, and spend it on the less fortunate ⁽¹⁰⁾. Sadaqah is also encouraged on various occasions during life -- to celebrate happy events and other ceremonies, or to avoid suffering. Also, charitable funds are collected and distributed among the deserving at the celebration of both the Eids, namely, Sadaqah al-Fitr or Zakaat al-Fitr.

Giving benevolently is fundamental in Islam, and its significance can be ascertained by the fact that at the very beginning of the Holy Qur'an it is mentioned as the hallmark of those who wish to achieve success in life ⁽¹¹⁾. Zakaat is collected from Muslims for the welfare of the community at large. It is an organized institution and a pillar of Islam. "And observe Prayer and pay the Zakaat; and whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees all that you do" ⁽¹²⁾. The term Zakaat

is derived from zaka, meaning purification and progress attained by Divine blessing. In the Holy Qur'an, paying Zakaat is commanded almost thirty times along with the offering of prayer ⁽¹³⁾. Zakaat is not like a tax which is levied by the government on the earning hands and paid by the people reluctantly. It is an act of spiritual purification offered with the sentiments of love and sympathy for the less-fortunate. It is levied for general welfare at a uniform rate of two and one half percent out of an individual's savings, that is, out of the accumulated wealth which is not in circulation. Those farmers who may possess number of cattle are required to give some animals in Zakaat.

For the welfare of the people, the Holy Qur'an teaches that such functionaries should be elected who are honest, trustworthy and able to deliver the needed services ⁽¹⁴⁾. It is the duty of the elected or appointed administrators to provide food, shelter, clothes, jobs, traveling facilities, justice, and other basic human needs in general. Based on the benevolent principles laid down by the Holy Qur'an, an elaborate welfare system was developed early on in Islam's history. In addition to the collection and disbursement of Sadaqah and Zakaat, land revenue (Kharaj), import duty ('Ushur), and spoils of war (Malganimat) were also administered to uplift the economical condition of the needy and the deserving. The non-Muslim subjects, who were religiously not obliged to partake in paying Sadaqah and Zakaat, were required to pay a tax called Jizya instead. Agricultural products were also acceptable in place of cash money. In conquered countries, the non-Muslim occupants of agricultural lands were not disposed of their lands, and thus a major cause of poverty was avoided. To eliminate poverty, agricultural productivity was increased by bringing the uncultivated lands under cultivation.

In the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ^{SAW} all revenues collected by the state were forthwith distributed among the deserving people. Hadhrat Abu Bakr ^{RA} maintained the same policy in his era of Khilafat. However, during the Khilafat of Hadhrat 'Umar ibn al-Khattab ^{RA} the Arab expansion was tremendously increased including Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. This territorial growth factor caused a rapid increase in state revenues. Hadhrat 'Umar ^{RA}, with consultation of other eminent companions of the Prophet ^{SAW} established Public Treasuries (Bait-ul-Mal) in Medina and other

provincial and central locations ⁽¹⁵⁾. He also ordered the first census in the history of Islam to ensure that no one was without the basic necessities of food, drink, and shelter as these were identified by the Holy Qur'an ⁽¹⁶⁾. Implementation of strict justice ⁽¹⁷⁾ was the cornerstone of the early Islamic State. The Prophet ^{SAW} had said, "Nations have come to a bad end for showing favors to highly placed persons while pressing hard on the common people" ⁽¹⁸⁾. Therefore, the welfare of the public on the basis of justice was enforced at all possible levels.

The Holy Qur'an claims God to be the Creator of all ⁽¹⁹⁾, and the Prophet Muhammad ^{SAW} is given the title Mercy for all Mankind ⁽²⁰⁾. He was the Holy Qur'an personified. He upheld the rights of the poor, the orphans, the widows, the sick, the slaves and the neighbors. His Companions ^{RA} exerted their utmost to put the Quranic principles and the sunnah (i.e. traditions) of the Prophet ^{SAW} into practice, and in fact they discharged Haqooq-ul Ibaad to the fullest possible extent, and thus a matchless welfare system was created to discharge all vitally important social services.

(1). 4:115.

(2). 31:18.

(3). 3:105.

(4). 3:111.

(5). 9:103

(6). 9:60

(7) 107:8

(8). 2:197

(9). 2:185

(10). 7:32

(11). 2:4

(12). 2:111

(13). e.g., 2:44; 2:84; 2:111; 2:278; 4:78; 5:13; 9:11; 9:18; 31:5; 73:21; 98:6.

(14). 4:59.

(15). Al-Farooq, Life of Umar the Great by Shibli Numani.

(16) (20:119-120).

(17). 4:136

(18). Bukhari, Kitab al-Hadud.

(19). 1:3

(20). 21:108



The Muslim Sunrise

*Go forth to the world, Muslim Sunrise!
With thy message of grace, to mankind
Speed on the broad highway of Allah,
Thy 'pinions, wide spread to the wind.
Fly high over highways and byways,
Rivers, roads winding out and then in,
And scatter thy beams, Muslim Sunrise,
Tender, loving, sympathy win.
Ah, well art thou named Muslim Sunrise,
For the sun rises high in the East
And flings wide, its life giving radiance
And gorgeous spectacular feast.
Bright warm rays of the Muslim Sunrise
In this wonderful spiritual age
Will take life and hope to the weary,
From despair their souls disengage.
Awaken the spiritual forces
That in so many dormant lay,
For Sunrise to all, bears this message-
Awaken, 'tis the dawn of a new day.*



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Location: Lincoln Park Grove 15,
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Zarik Khan 630-309-2640

Saifra Khan 630-967-8472



Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih IV (ra)
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edition of the *New York Times*

“Listening to Obama’s Message in Cairo”

By Sardar Anees Ahmad
Waterloo, New York

To the Editor:

As extremists inherently pit Islam against the West and Westerners often espouse progressive ideals to the Muslim world in a nonprogressive manner, I doubted if any public figure could offer concrete ideas to promote peace. President Obama’s Cairo address, however, dispelled those doubts.

Presenting a vast overlap of Islamic and American ideals, the president’s address gave the Muslim world hope, and extremists’ angst. The president referred to the Koran and history to show that Islam advocates for pluralism, education and sanctity of



Egyptians listen to President Barack Obama’s Cairo speech

life. He reminded the Muslim world of America’s support for Islam dating back to John Adams’s presidency, to its defense of the hijab, or head scarf, to the fact that so many Muslims have succeeded in so many ways in America.

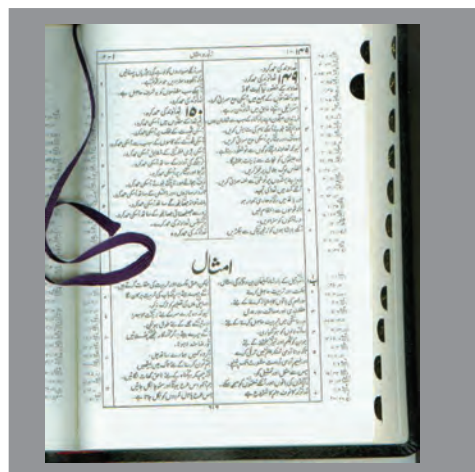
By incorporating Islam into the equation rather than rejecting it, President Obama presented the most conciliatory message for global peace in recent memory: swords may bend heads, but only ideas bend minds.

Originally printed in the 5/28/09
edition of the *New Haven Register*

“Don’t Burn Bibles, Build Bridges”

By Sohail Husain
New Haven, Connecticut

As a Muslim, I was perplexed to read that US officials in Afghanistan were prompted to burn several copies of a local translation of the Bible after rumors spread that US soldiers might proselytize Christianity by distributing them. Firstly, the Muslim holy book the



Quran reveres the Bible as guidance from God. Secondly, the fact that there is a real fear of violence resulting from preaching Christianity in troubled Afghanistan

bears sad testimony to the intolerant land of Kabul, but not to the Quran, which states, “There is no compulsion in matters of faith.” Thirdly, the Prophet of Islam Muhammad during his lifetime 1500 years ago went so far as to advise his followers that to rebuild the churches of a certain Christian delegation would constitute an act of benevolence. Based on the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet, this Muslim keeps a Bible respectfully perched in his library, not for the burning, but for building common bridges of understanding.

“Suicide Bombing a National, Not a Religious, Trait”

Originally published in *The Fingers Lakes Times* (New York), July 24, 2009

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

The Washington Times recently reported that the Taliban are buying children, as young as 7 years of age and at prices ranging from \$7,000- \$14,000, to serve as suicide bombers.

Suicide attacks, as shocking and horrifying as they are, become an even more warped phenomenon when religion is used for their justification. How can Islam, a religion which literally bears the name ‘peace’, condone suicide terrorism?



First, suicide bombing is not solely, nor predominantly, a Muslim phenomenon. In the modern era, suicide bombing gained prominence with efforts of the predominantly Hindu ‘Tamil Tiger’ Liberation movement in Sri Lanka. Prof. Robert Pape of Chicago University, an authority on terrorism, considers the Tigers the “leading instigator” of suicide terrorism. In his book *Dying to Win*, Pape notes that Muslims are guilty for less than half of all suicide attacks. Furthermore, 30% of Muslim suicide attacks are secularly motivated. Pape concludes that it is not religion, but nationalism which spurs this last resort effort to liberate one’s country: “every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980 has had as its central objective to compel a democratic state to withdraw combat forces from territory that the terrorists’ prize ... Absent (foreign occupation), we rarely see suicide terrorism.” Indeed, the Tamil Tigers are a nationalist, not a religious, terrorist outfit. Lawrence Wright, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book on 9/11 *The Looming Tower*, agrees with Pape’s core argument.

Still, however few, Muslims are guilty of too many suicide attacks. The argument that Muslim suicide terrorists are uneducated is a myth – the majority is well educated. Pape notes that religion, while not the primary factor in motivating terrorism, is still a factor. The occupied party oftentimes exploits religious differences with that of the occupier to legitimize its cause. So does Islam condone suicide terrorism? No.

The Qur’an clearly states “and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands” (2:196); “And kill not your own selves” (4:30). Prophet Muhammad declared that intentionally killing oneself is tantamount to damna-

tion and ordered his followers to never long for death (Bukhari). Once, following a battle, a Muslim was lauding the efforts of a man had fought most bravely for the Muslims. On hearing this, Muhammad replied, “Indeed, he is amongst the people of the (Hell) Fire.” It was later discovered that the brave man was wounded in battle and drove his sword into his chest, taking his own life (Bukhari).

Still, why do well educated, affluent Muslims become suicide bombers if Islam categorically forbids such behavior? In the respected conservative mouthpiece *Policy Review*, an enlightening piece entitled “Religion and Economic Development” argues that economic instability provides fertile ground for the birth of suicide terrorists. Today, despite its grip on oil, the Muslim World’s combined GDP is less than that of Germany. Coupled with a largely non-existent political process, suicide terrorism is the last resort to annihilate a system the terrorist feels alienated from.

But if Islam condemns suicide terrorism, how can terrorists carry out suicide attacks in the name of Islam? The inspiration for the modern day suicide terrorist is Ayman al-Zawahiri, the #2 man for Al-Qaeda. As Lawrence Wright notes, Zawahiri argues that the Muslim world’s situation is so precarious that exceptions regarding suicide must be made. Zawahiri has also misquoted and distorted certain instances of early Muslims in battle to validate suicide attacks. With misguided dreams of rewards that await martyrs in the afterlife, Wright observes that the suicide terrorist’s mentality is not to kill, but to die. It is as Friedrich Nietzsche observed, “Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups.”

May Day: A Christian Holiday

Under the headline, "Pope Backs May Day as Christian Holiday", the New York Times (May 3, 1953) reports that:

"In a May Day speech he delivered to 4,000 workers gathered in the Vatican from many parts of Italy, the Pope endorsed the celebrations of the day as a Christian holiday for labor." The Times then quotes the Pope saying concerning May Day: "Who better than the true Christian can give it a profound significance?"

It is interesting in this connection to trace the origin of May Day in the past history. The Funk And Wagnall's New Standard Encyclopedia says:

"This festival was celebrated by all classes and represented continuance of an ancient pagan ceremony. It is possibly a survival of rites originally offered to the Roman Goddess Maia, who was worshipped as the principle cause of fertility".

One wonders how many of the present day Christian doctrines and ceremonies may have been borrowed from the ancient custom rituals and later established as genuine Christian institutions.

Christian Hope

The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches meets during August 1954 in Evanston for two weeks. It is reported that for the first week the main theme will center around one subject: Christian hope. There may be quite a divergence of opinion among the Christian churches, including both the invited and non-invited denominations, on this subject. The task is not an easy one. There are some who think of the Christian hope in terms of some earthly success. Others may be thinking solely with reference to another world or another epoch beyond the present one. There are some who declare that man's hope lies in rejection of this present world and escape from it. There are still others who think that Christian hope lies only in professing that a human



being, born of a woman, though unwillingly as far as the authority of the New Testament goes, gave his life and thus carried our sins.

It seems most appropriate to us to look for an answer to this very important and essential question in the words of Jesus^{as} himself. None other could give a better answer as to what could be the Christian hope. The New Testament says that when Jesus^{as} was departing from his disciples he left one message of hope with them. He clearly said:

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

...I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. (John 16: 7-13)

The message of hope, as explained by Jesus^{as} was the coming of the Comforter to reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It was the glad tidings of the coming of the Spirit of Truth to guide the world unto all truth. The World Council of Churches will do a great service if they focus the attention of the Christian world to these words of Jesus^{as} and then look for the Comforter, the Holy Prophet Muhammad ^{saw}.

Book Review: The Crucifixion and the Quran: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought, by Todd Lawson

2009 One World Publications, 279pp

By Tahir Ijaz, M.D
San Diego, California

“And for their saying ‘we did slay the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah’, whereas they slew him not (wa ma qatalahu), nor did they bring about his death on the cross (wa ma salabuhu), but was made to appear to them like so (wa lakin shubbiha lahum); and those who differ therein are certainly in doubt about it; they have no knowledge thereof, but only pursue a conjecture; and they did not arrive at a certainty concerning it. On the contrary, Allah exalted him (rafaa) to Himself. And Allah is Mighty, Wise (4:158).

The above verse forms one of the pillars of Islamic Christology, the only Quranic verse referring directly to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ^{as}. One of the ironies is that the conjecture and uncertainty mentioned in the verse that befell the Jews of Jesus’^{as} day, also befell the Muslims who themselves started to conjecture and differ as to the exact circumstances of what had occurred to Jesus^{as}. This is partly exacerbated by the fact that the the hadith, the recorded oral traditions of the Holy Prophet^{saw}, do not shed any light directly on the crucifixion itself with reference to the above verse.



The Crucifixion and the Qur'an

A Study in the History of Muslim Thought

TODD LAWSON

In most Islamic circles, the crucifixion of Jesus^{as} was denied altogether. Rather, Allah miraculously transformed someone into a physical image of Jesus^{as}, and the Jews crucified that person, thinking him to be Jesus^{as}. This has come to be known as the substitution theory. Jesus^{as}, having been saved from such suffering and death, ascended to God in Heaven. It is this substitution theory that figures prominently in the tafsir literature.

The book *The Crucifixion and the Quran* by Todd Lawson, is an excellent attempt to encapsulate and summarize some 1300 years of Islamic exegetical history and scholarship on the meaning of the aforesaid verse. The author is an Associate Professor at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, Canada.

After discussing the lexical aspects of the verse, Lawson references *mufasssirun* (Quran commentators) from three eras: pre at-Tabari, i.e. pre 923 A.D, classical exegetical traditions 923-1505 A.D, and finally modern interpretations, including a very brief mention of Ah-madiyya.

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Lawson postulates this belief entered Islamic thought from the influence of Docetism, espoused by many Christian sects at the dawn of the advent of Islam. Docetism was a philosophy describing matter and spirit to be antagonistic; matter was considered evil, and spirit considered good or holy. Docetism, as practiced by many Gnostic Christian sects of the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D, proposed Jesus^{as} was a spirit and only 'appeared' to have a real human body, and his suffering and death on the cross was illusory. It was either an illusion that a crucifixion actually occurred (i.e. historicity of the crucifixion denied) or if it did occur, someone else substituted for Jesus^{as}. Docetism had its roots in the confusion some felt, in the notion of the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus^{as} – how could the Son of God (spirit) be subject to suffering and death?

Lawson's detailed lexical analysis of

Qur'anic terms relating to is thorough. Starting with 5:117 and 3:55, on the word *mutawaffika*, 'to take', Lawson favors the interpretation of biologic death of Jesus^{as}, the root 'w-f-y' connoting physical death, referencing other portions of the Qur'an.

The term *salabuhu* (s-l-b), means 'to crucify' and its roots also occur in several places in the Holy Qur'an, listed by the author. Lawson does not, however, clarify or expand on the issue of what it means not to be crucified. Does it mean not to be nailed to the cross or does it mean not to die on the cross without denial of being nailed? Analysis of the root (s-l-b) in the Qur'an itself shows it relates to bones, such as the backbone, with the classic dictionaries stating the term connotes breaking bones. The phrase 'wa ma salabuhu' would mean 'did not kill him by crucifixion in so far as they did not break his bones'. This finds credence from the Qur'an 12:42, regarding Joseph's fellow prisoner, stating 'he will be crucified (salaba) so the birds (i.e. vultures) will eat from his head'. *Salabuhu* thus means death by crucifixion, with the negation *ma salabuhu* indicating not dying from the process of crucifixion, with no denial Jesus^{as} was nailed on the cross.

Lawson defers to Lane's lexicon of the Arabic language regarding interpretation of *shubbiha lahum*, in addition to noting the roots (sh-b-h) found in other Qur'anic passages. The phrase connotes semblance to something else, a likeness, and ambiguous, dubious or obscure situation. According to the author the substitution theory is not supported or rejected by this phrase, and does note that the substitution theory would 'seem to quite a reach' based on the dictionary meanings. One thing is certainly clear: no person is explicitly mentioned as a substitute for Jesus^{as}, even though commentators, not addressing the grammatical issues, took the verse to mean someone else took his place.

The term *rafaa* (to rise up) denotes both

lifting an object physically or Divine exaltation and elevating the rank of a person. Lawson notes many exegetes took the term 'anthropomorphically', i.e. bodily ascension despite the obvious difficulty that Allah is placeless - only to be challenged by other exegetes on theological and terminological grounds.

The majority of the book is focused on references from the various exegetical traditions. Lawson notes two basic versions of the substitution theory. A volunteer substitute (the predominant hypothesis) and the punishment substitute for Jesus (as), where someone was forced to take his place.

Muslim scholar at-Tabari (c 923 A.D) is an important source of information about beliefs current in his day and beliefs in centuries prior, as older commentaries are referred to in his work, from the 8th century A.D. The most popular versions of the substitution legend are told on the authority of Wahb (c 732 A.D), a Yemeni Jewish convert, quoted by at-Tabari. Some scholars however contend he was born a Muslim, but was influenced by biblical traditions due to interactions with Jews and Christians in his native city of Dhimar. This led to *Israiliyyat* or an incorporation of stories called 'People of Book' into his exegetical works. One form of the story is that Jesus^{as} was in a house with seven disciples when the Jews surrounded them. When the Jews entered, God miraculously changed all of the disciples to look like Jesus^{as}. The Jews demanded to know who the real Jesus^{as} was, threatening to kill them all if there was no response. Jesus (as) proposed, 'who would purchase himself paradise today?' One of the disciples volunteered, and the Jews crucified him in Jesus' as place.

In another version, a disciple offered to tell the Jews the whereabouts of Jesus^{as} who was in hiding. Jesus^{as} had previously foretold that one disciple would betray him for money, obviously drawn on from the Gospel story of Judas. However, Divine retribution

for this treachery made this disciple look like Jesus^{as}, and Jews crucified him instead. Later Jesus^{as} met his mother and disciples, and assured them he was with God now, before ascending.

Ibn Ishaq (c 767 A.D) sources quote unnamed Christian converts that the person who substituted for Jesus^{as}, apparently voluntarily, was a man named Serjes, a 13th disciple. Other commentators such as al Balkhi (c 767 A.D) stated the likeness of Jesus^{as} was cast on a guard the Jews had placed over Jesus^{as}.

Lawson also quotes from the tafsir attributed to Ibn Abbas (c 687 A.D), the oldest known tafsir. However works attributed to early figures of Islamic history have always carried some questions of authenticity. Modern scholarship now considers this commentary to be from the 10th century A.D, attributed to Ibn Abbas. According to this commentary, God foiled the plan of the Jews by raising Jesus^{as} to Himself and miraculously forcibly transforming a man named Tityanus to resemble Jesus^{as}.

The stories relating to voluntary substitution may have arisen to counter a problem associated with the idea of substitution: why would God force an innocent person to suffer and die to save another? In yet another version quoted by Al Thalabi (c 1035 AD), it is related a certain Jew consciously pretended to be Jesus^{as}. When his miracles failed, he was crucified by the angry crowd, who took him for Jesus^{as}. Al Thalabi also mentions another tradition that Pilate, the Roman official mentioned in the Gospels, was made to look like Jesus^{as}.

Some versions of the substitution theory even state God cast the likeness of Jesus^{as} on the man's face only and not the body. Thus the people were confused as to the identity of the man killed. This was added to explain the rest of the verse which states those who differed concerning him followed only their conjecture.

All in all, Lawson briefly reviews the works of some thirty mufasssirun from the early period of Islam to the classic and medieval period. Though most uphold some kind of substitution story, the details are widely different with no source going back to the Holy Prophetsaw. One scholar, Al Razi (c 1200 A.D) in his grand commentary entitled Mafatih al ghayb, ('Key to the Unseen'), was skeptical of the substitution legends handed down, and critical of the idea that Jesus^{as} physically ascended to God, since God was not located somewhere. He was a philoso-



The work by Professor Lawson is an interesting addition to the literature for those scholars interested in analyzing developments in Islamic Christology over the centuries and studying how a belief starts, evolves and transforms, based on the religious and socio-cultural milieu at the time the various exegetical works were composed.

pher, theologian and jurist. His work is considered monumental, with a style and organization and clarity unmatched according to most scholars of Islamic literature. In the end, he remained an agnostic of sort, finding serious difficulties with the substitution legends, and concluding only Allah knew best.

In the modern era, half dozen commentaries are discussed, including Mawdudi's works, Tafsir al Manar by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and in a footnote, about the Ahmadiyya view without much comment. The Ahmadiyya view has greatly influenced Muslim thinking in this century. According to the Ahmadiyya interpretation, Jesus^{as} was nailed on the cross but did not die on it. However some sort of confusion ensued; his enemies were not certain what transpired, and were not certain he actually died; it only appeared to them he was crucified to death. He recovered from his injuries. The intent of the enemies, to apply the Deuteronomy verse that 'he that is nailed to death is accursed' was foiled, and instead Allah exalted Jesus^{as} to Himself.

Lawson notes the thrust of Mawdudi's works is to counter Ahmadiyya claims on the lexical analysis of words in various verses pertaining to Jesus^{as}. For instance, Mawdudi opines that the Ahmadiyya argument that mutawaffika only means death since no

example can be found in the Arabic literature otherwise, is meaningless, since this was the only incident of this kind in human history. The word maut or 'death' was not used for Jesus^{as}, instead only mutawaffika, which connotes 'taking away', a euphemism for death. Moreover, his contention is, since the authentic traditions speak of the descent of Jesus^{as} son of Mary in the future, it is reasonable to assume he did not die.

One modern commentary missed by Lawson, and which is very popular in the Muslim communities around the world is by Muhammad Asad (1900-1992), a Jewish convert to Islam. Asad vigorously contends in The Message of the Quran, that the substitution theory is a fanciful legend concocted by stories brought in by the classical commentators without the slightest support from the Qur'an or authentic traditions. He dismisses the entire crucifixion story as mythical. He takes the word rafaa to mean as 'exaltation', not physical ascension, in the same way Prophet Idris^{as} is described in the Qur'an.

The work by Professor Lawson is an interesting addition to the literature for those scholars interested in analyzing developments in Islamic Christology over the centuries and studying how a belief starts, evolves and transforms, based on the religious and socio-cultural milieu at the time the various exegetical works were composed. ♦

Sayings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}

From *Sahih Bukhari*, the Book of Marriage:

Narrated Abu Burda's father:

Allah's Apostle said, "Any man who has a slave girl who he educates properly, teaches good manners, manumits and marries her, will get a double reward. In addition, if anyone from the People of the Book (i.e. Christians & Jews) believes in his own prophet and then believes in me, then he will get a double reward. Also, any slave who fulfills his duty to his master and to his Lord, will get a double reward." (Hadith # 20)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, "A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, family status, beauty and her piety. You should marry the virtuous woman or else you will be unfortunate." (Hadith # 27)

The spirit of giving in the way of God

Islam encourages the Muslim to spend from his money for Allah's sake whenever he is capable of doing so, and it stresses on the great virtues of giving a charity. The Prophet^{SAW} said, 'The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the one that gives, and the lower hand is the one that takes'.

Jethro and Stu were sittin' on a porch shaving wood and trying to have a conversation. In the back woods country, meaningful conversation is hard to come by.

Jethro: If you had two million dollars, would you give me a million of it?

Stu: Why would you even ask me a question like that? You know you are my friend. I love you like a brother. Absolutely, certainly if I had two million dollars I would give you a million of it.

Jethro: If you had two mansions, would you give me one of them?

Stu: I told you I love you like a brother. I'll do anything for you. Certainly and surely if I had two mansions, I would give you one of them in an instant.

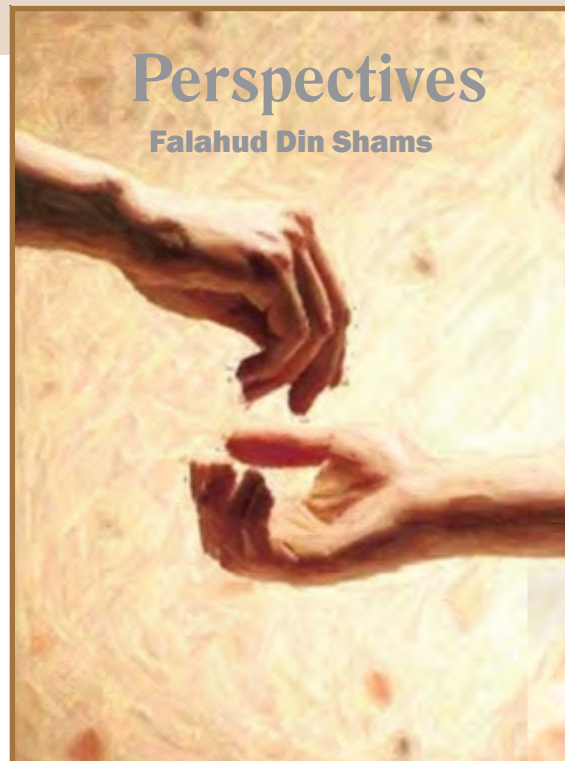
Jethro: How about if you had two cars, would you give me one of them?

Stu: Certainly yes. Quit asking me these kinds of questions. I have told you if I come to get two of anything, I would surely give you one of them.

Jethro: What about if you had two hogs, would you give me one of them?

Stu: You know that ain't fair. You know I've got two hogs.

You've probably heard one version or another of the above joke. We are always trying to give away something we don't have. Many of us



dream and pray (mind you very sincerely) that if we win the lottery, we will build a mosque or do other great charitable things. Maybe that's our way of bribing God to answer our prayers?

Maybe that's our way of appeasing our conscience and convincing ourselves that we are good people? We simply don't have the opportunity to do big things. Maybe that's our way to buy dreams for a week by getting a lotto ticket for a dollar? A week's worth of dreams for a buck is sensational.

The problem with this phenomena

is that, like Stu, we don't share what we already have. We are unusually generous in our desire to give away the big things we don't have. Stu is not willing to give one of his hogs to Jethro but he would give him a million dollars if he were to get hold of two million dollars.

We do not give our proper amount of contribution for the sake of God but are willing to build a mosque if we were to win the lottery. The fact is that we are creatures of habit – if we don't share what we have now, it's unlikely we would change if we had more.

It is self-deception to think we can better manage wealth in the event we had more. Over

fifty percent of lottery winners file bankruptcy or get in serious trouble including suicide! They all thought they could handle winning the lottery.

Giving in the way of God doesn't have much to do with how much a person has. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} made an appeal, his closest friend Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{RA} gave everything he possessed for the cause of Islam. At the same time Hadhrat Omar^{RA} (who later on became the 2nd Caliph) sacrificed half of all of his possessions. In the Eyes of God and of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, the rank of Abu Bakr^{RA} was much

greater than that of Omar^{RA}. It didn't matter whether or not all of the wealth of Abu Bakr^{RA} was less than half of Omar's. It was the spirit of sacrifice that mattered, not the amount.

The rich have a problem getting into heaven because they desire to multiply their wealth. It is a never-ending dream. The saying of Jesus is famous: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven." This illustrates how challenging it is to overcome the desire of becoming wealthier at every stage of our lives and risking entry into heaven.

The Holy Prophet^{SAW} explained the fate of the rich in simple words. Hadhrat Usamah^{RA} relates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} said, "I stood at the gate of Paradise and observed that the majority of those who entered were the lowly. The wealthy had been held back from it."

There is another psychological angle to give what we don't have. We keep on putting off giving things to the future. The proper time to give is now, not next week, next month, next year or the uncertain time we wake up as millionaires (Yeah right! Keep dreaming..).

Prophet Abraham^{AS} arose as the epitome of sacrifice at the time he was asked. He would not wait until he was ready and willing in the future. He interpreted his dream as the Lord asking him to literally sacrifice his son. He did not take time to sort things out. He did not say to the Lord, "Let me talk this over with my son and I will get back to you." Analyze what he could have considered; possibly consider different interpretations of

his dream. Consider the fact that there could be another way to fulfill his dream or dismiss it altogether as a false alarm. He could have responded like the Jews who repeatedly asked questions about the dun cow that the Lord asked them to sacrifice. Asking the Lord the color, shape and age of the cow can buy a lot of valuable time.

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Abraham^{AS} was ready to sacrifice now, not tomorrow, next week or next month. His spirit of sacrifice was so great that Allah preserved his example until the Judgment Day through the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Muslims all over the world celebrate that spirit of sacrifice once a year on Eid-ul Adhiya.

We don't have to go to ancient history to see how people offered

themselves, their wealth and possessions. Our fathers and grandfathers set up the example in the early days when they sacrificed for the founder of our community, the Promised Messiah^{AS}. Look at the list of contributions that the Promised Messiah^{AS} has recorded in some of his books. The majority of the contributions are small amounts. Some are not even in rupees, but in change. Then you look at the praise and the kind words he used for them because he knew that they offered what they had. It had nothing to do with the amount.

It had to do with two things. They offered what they had regardless of how little it was. And they offered at the time it was needed and asked for.

We have great examples to follow of sacrifices for the sake of God. We don't need to look at the example of Jethro and Stu. After all, they're just a couple of country boys with dreams of their own...and dreams won't go too far without action.

Speaking of our two friends, Jethro and Stu were still sitting on the porch when a priest passed by who had a cast on his arm. Jethro said "hullo" to the priest and asked him how his arm got broken. The priest said that he fell in the bathtub, and he kept on going on his way. There was silence for a while until Jethro spoke up.

Jethro: Hey Stu, what is a bathtub anyhow?

Stu: How would I know, Jethro, you know I ain't no Catholic! ♦



Eid Mubarak

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